

D 317
2
901
copy 1

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

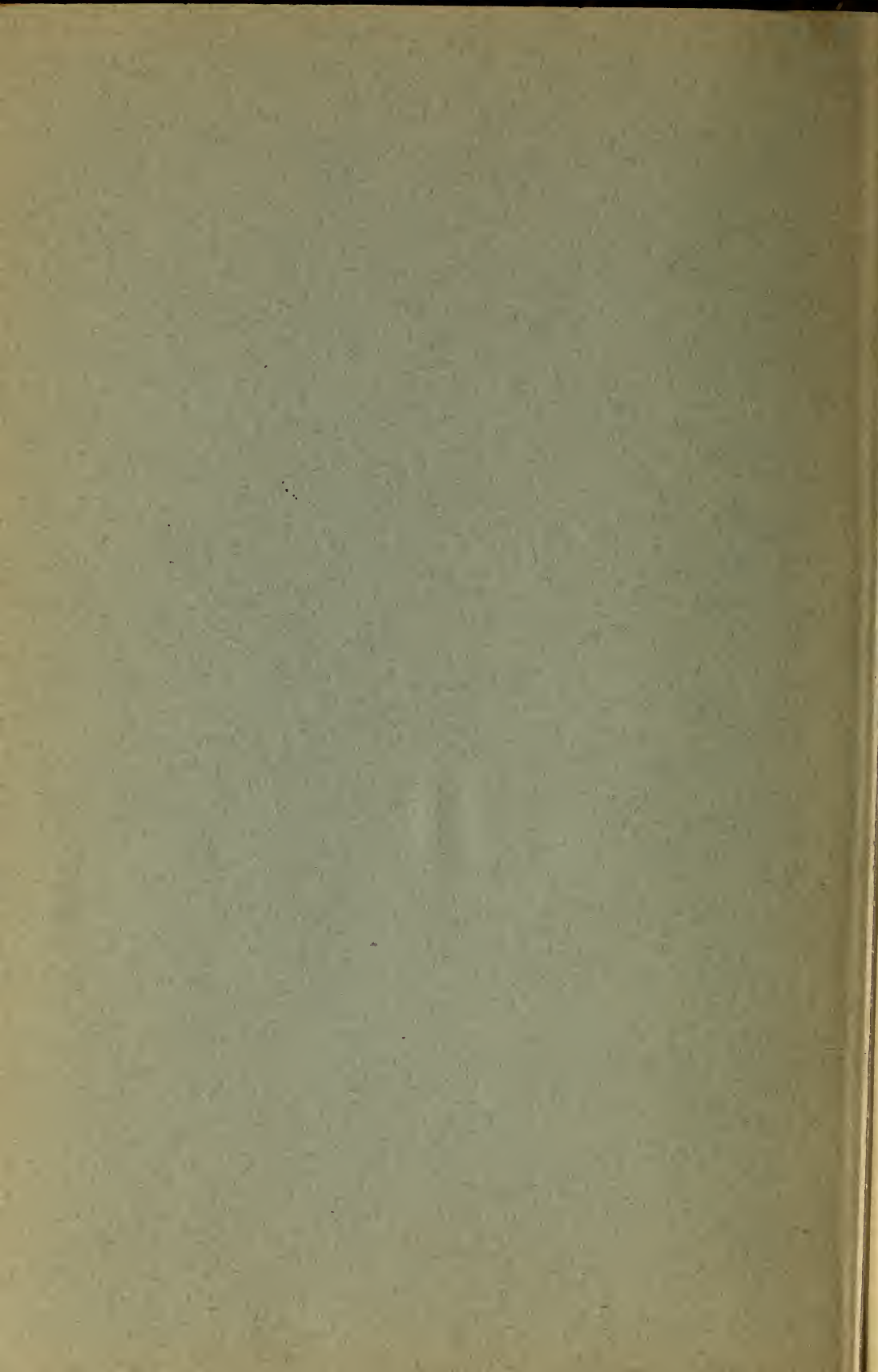
BY

CHARLES W. FAIRBANKS

Baker University

BALDWIN, KANSAS

June 7, 1901



COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

BY

CHARLES W. FAIRBANKS



Baker University

BALDWIN, KANSAS

June 7, 1901

1901
Levey Bros. & Co.
Indianapolis

4-D 317
.2
1901

P.
Congressional
Committees.
13Ap'03

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Commencement Day has no fellow. There is no other day in all the year like unto it. It is full of sweetness and life, of pleasant reminiscence and of happy expectation. It is essentially the day of youth, of splendid young womanhood and noble young manhood. Our elders live over the blessed days which have faded into the past, and are themselves young again. It is not the day of the pessimist, but is the hour of the optimist. It is the time when the virtues which dignify and glorify humanity amplest fruitage bear, and when we behold the splendor of our institutions, not with the eye of a mere political partisan, nor with the vision of a sordid materialist.

This is a day when we withdraw from the busy marts, the affairs of state—when we leave the pulpit and our briefs, and take stock, if you please, of those higher qualities which are our chief glory.

I am reminded of the utterance of the gifted Curtis upon a similar occasion: "There is a modern English picture," said he, "which the genius of Hawthorne might have inspired. The painter calls it 'How They Met Themselves.' A man and a woman, haggard and weary, wandering lost in the somber wood, suddenly come upon the shadowy figures of a youth and a maid. Some mysterious fascination fixes the gaze and stills the hearts of the wanderers and their amazement deepens into awe as they gradually recognize themselves as they were—the soft bloom of youth upon their rounded cheeks, the dewy light of hope in their trusting eyes, exulting confidence in their springing step, themselves blithe and radiant with the glory of the dawn." To-day we meet ourselves here as we were at our matriculation and during the years which were crowned at commencement—years which were the most luminous of all that we have lived.

Those of us who have hitherto received our degrees, whether from this noble institution, so rich in its splendid influences, or from some of her sister institutions, come here, as you will do in after years, with keen and profound appreciation. These buildings for almost half a century have looked upon scenes like this. Thousands have come and gone, and many thousands more will come and go in the years before us. The faculty and the student body are ever changing, yet our interest in the old university does not abate. These halls are of brick and stone and mortar, yet we have almost an affection for them. It was the great Webster who, when pleading the memorable cause of his alma mater, Dartmouth college, in the great supreme court of the United States, said, with visible emotion that moved those about him: "It is, indeed, a small college, but there are those who love it."

You enter upon the activities of life under favorable auspices. The omens are propitious. Your scholastic course, crowned the old century with its tremendous achievements. In all the centuries that are passed, not one was filled with such mighty and significant events in the onward march of humanity. No such tremendous advance was before made in knowledge, in the arts. Science seems to have revealed the most hidden and important secrets of nature. She has scanned the heavens and fathomed the seas. She has asserted dominion over the enemies of man and made them his obedient servants. Fire and water and electricity have been made to do his bidding in countless ways. Time and space have been reduced in international communication and the world made relatively smaller; in fact, it has been reduced to a vast neighborhood.

The zone of human liberty has been extended until about the greater portion of the globe man recognizes

no master except Almighty God. The beams of civilization and righteousness are "cast afar" and where they penetrate, slavery and serfdom vanish as vice before virtue.

We have a veneration for the past and it is well. Veneration is akin to gratitude, one of the gentlest virtues. We are grateful to those of the past who added to the sum of the world's knowledge. We are wont to linger about Athens and Rome. We study their histories, their mighty contribution to literature, the arts and the sciences. The story of their triumphs and defeats, their glory and their shame, their rise and their fall, ~~are~~^{is} familiar to us.

We are grateful to those who have lighted a torch in any of the great departments of human experience. We delight to dwell with the old philosophers, with Socrates and Plato; with the old poets, Homer and Virgil; with the old historians, Herodotus and Xenophon; with the old scientists, Newton and Davy; with the old musicians, Beethoven and Mozart, and with the old orators. We are their perpetual, grateful debtors. We have studied their philosophies. We have been moved by their verse. We have been made acquainted with the subtle mysteries of nature. We have been entranced by their song and have been stirred by their eloquence. We have been inspired by "the exquisite grace of Raphael, and the sublimity and energy of Michael Angelo."

But we stand upon a summit unattained by them. The school boy of to-day is wiser than the venerable philosophers who studied in the groves of Academus.

The magic of the laboratory discloses elements and combinations undreamed of by the fathers of chemistry.

With what rapture Galileo would turn the modern telescope to Venus and Jupiter and to worlds of which he knew not.

How Franklin would marvel at the electric current as it encircles the globe, freighted with intelligence and faithfully carrying the human voice thousands of miles, through cities, beneath rivers, across plains and amidst mountain fastnesses!

How Fulton would watch with rapture the modern merchantman cleaving the trackless sea with express train speed! How he would have been stirred by the Oregon, that invincible steel monster of the deep, in her swift race from the Pacific to the Atlantic, that she might vindicate the national honor!

You enter upon the larger theater of life at an opportune time. There was never more need of educated men and women, who are willing to consecrate themselves to the serious work of life, which makes for the betterment and exaltation of their fellow men. The field of your opportunity is unlimited. What you will accomplish can be measured alone by your will and your capacity. You will find in every avenue of opportunity which stretches before you men and women of ability and of zeal inviting you to enter the generous contest.

You will meet with both encouragement and discouragement. The way may sometimes look dark and the future unpromising, but with stout heart, upright purpose and complete consecration to your work, you can and should win success. Walk erect; be self-reliant. In the final analysis your victories must be won through your own strong right arm. The way to place and power is open to all alike. Your future is to be determined, not by the accident of birth, not by what your ancestors were, but by what you are, by what you shall yourselves accomplish. Stand fast for the maintenance of civil and religious liberty for the preservation of these two great fundamental doctrines for which our forefathers contended with titanic power.

Promote civic righteousness; do not avoid the caucus, fearing it will contaminate you, but attend it to the end that it may not contaminate the state. In the ballot box our liberties are compounded. See to it that it gives true expression of the public will. Preserve it from pollution; protect it and defend it as you would preserve the Ark of the Covenant, for it has been purchased by the priceless blood of countless heroes upon the battlefields of the republic.

To be an American citizen to-day means more than ever before, it means greater opportunity and enlarged responsibility. Each year finds us camped upon new heights in our onward march.

The scholar must always have a care for the republic. The university has, indeed, not been true to its opportunity if it has failed to inculcate an intense interest in the preservation of the republic and in its future welfare. The greater the knowledge which the student bears hence, the heavier his civic obligations. The splendid national fabric, the like of which you have not thus far discovered in your historic research, is the fruit of the wisdom and patriotism of your fathers, and it must not be given over to those who comprehend not its full and splendid significance.

We look upon our country grown great and strong. We compare it with others and rejoice at the comparison. We are overmuch given, I fear, to boasting of our strength. We should not forget that real power needs no other herald than itself.

We take pride in our territory which spans the continent, which lies within the Arctic circle, and in the distant seas.

We point to our rich fields, our vast forests and to the exhaustless treasures of the earth; to our splendid cities and to our far-reaching highways of commerce; to our enormous trade statistics, to our in-

vincible fleets. But these, all these, are not our chief glory. We find our most cherished national achievement in the virtue and intelligence and in the all-pervading charity of our people. The rich manifestations of our commercial power, our military and naval strength, great and splendid as they are, are not to be counted when compared with the moral and intellectual grandeur of our people.

There has been some suggestion that the American people are given over to commercialism; that they are possessed of the materialistic spirit, and take too little note of the development of those finer and gentler qualities which are at once the flower and fruit of our civilization. We find the complete denial of this suggestion in our expanding common school system, in the development of our colleges and universities, in the countless charities and in the increasing number of those who are dedicating themselves to the sacred work of the church.

The pulpit was never filled by abler nor better men—men more thoroughly dedicated to their high and holy calling.

The lecture room was never the source of more wholesome influences than it is to-day.

There is on every hand, in every city, village and hamlet, a generous rivalry among men and women to promote some charity or some work which shall tend to uplift the vicious, the ignorant, and the unfortunate.

Those who accumulate wealth stand disgraced and dishonored if they do not use it for the benefit of others.

Greater problems await you than engaged the attention of your fathers. But a few years ago, the United States, impelled by the appeals of humanity, drew the sword in her high and holy cause. Cuba had caught the spirit of liberty from the great re-

public, and wished herself to be free. The Spanish government, schooled beyond all others in lessons of cruelty, influenced by the spirit of the middle ages, undertook to retain her feeble hold by methods disgraceful even to savagery. Conditions on the island became intolerable. The moral sense of the United States was so offended against, that the congress, in the exercise of its constitutional power, declared war. The hour had arrived when the Spanish flag must be withdrawn and cease forever to further contaminate the air of the Western continent. It could no longer stay the progress of liberty and advancing civilization. It must either keep step with the march of the nations dedicated to freedom, or else retire to the peninsula of Spain.

An army was summoned to execute the supreme decree of congress. It came from the farms, the workshops, the colleges and the universities, two hundred and fifty thousand strong. It came singing the Battle Hymn of the Republic:

“In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across
the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and
me,
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make
men free.”

The first blow was struck in Manila harbor, then one of the least and now one of the best known harbors in the world. Later came San Juan Hill and Santiago, and then came peace. The great Republic struck, not in anger, not against liberty, but for liberty and her sacred cause. It struck not for territorial aggrandizement, or the exploitation of commercial power, but to enlarge freedom's bounds. Our arms have given to us new peoples. They are unfamiliar with the ways of republican government. They know not the blessings of our advancing civi-

zation. Their fortunes are joined with ours. Their destiny, in a high sense, is within our keeping.

The problem which is before us is not free from perplexity. The way is filled with difficulties, but no one can entertain a doubt that we have the capacity, the courage and a sense of justice, quite adequate to the task.

There is new work for the school room, for school, college and university. Through them come the highest conception of the majesty and meaning of republican government, the true dignity of American manhood.

We have heard much upon the hustings to the effect that the constitution follows the flag. Our constitutional expounders may differ with respect to this, but upon one question there is unity of sentiment in every patriotic heart that abides within the limits of the republic, and that is that the American school house, the American college, and the American university follow the flag. They are potential in their influence upon public thought, and more powerful than constitutions. They are the everlasting bulwark of national security. Close the school room, shut up the colleges and the universities, and the days of the republic are numbered.

We are a people of peace and desirous of winning its ample trophies. Brilliant as have been our achievements in arms, our chief allurments are in the ways of tranquillity. Our history is but brief compared with that of the elder states, but we have fought many wars, and our flag is yet a total stranger to defeat.

Our engagements have been, with but one exception, with foreign powers. Our civil war was greater than all; more terrific than all. American contended with American with terrific power. The prize of battle was the life of the republic. The stories

of our heroes are upon the enduring pages of history. Our battle fields and the countless graves of our soldiery tell of the tremendous cost of liberty.

Let us hope that the days of war have passed; that the sword shall remain undrawn forever.

Let us inculcate a lofty spirit of brotherhood, and leave to the arbitral tribunals of peace the adjustment of international differences. There abide with us no questions or causes for domestic feud; for armed conflict. The cruel and imperious institution of human slavery became a cornerstone of the republic. It was an offense to the laws of God and in good time it had to be mastered or master the republic. With the richest blood that ever coursed through human veins it was washed away. There lurks no such danger now. Our serious differences, if such there must be, will be with foreign powers.

Our expanding greatness, outstripping other nations in our progress, may render us regardless of their rights. Power is sometimes thoughtless; it is sometimes autocratic. Nothing so becomes it as its sparing use.

We should see to it that our country is pervaded with a sense of justice and of equity with respect to other powers. The demagogue and political time-server should not be permitted, for the purpose of promoting selfish ends, to undertake to foment discord between our government and other nations. We should hold to the exalted rule of fair dealing between ourselves and the weakest as well as the strongest powers of the earth. If differences should arise—and in good time they no doubt will arise—we should seek their settlement in the arbitral tribunal rather than upon the field.

In The Hague treaty we find the first and a substantial step toward the consummation of this wish and the maintenance of international peace.

The last century was born amid the convulsions of war. The new century upon which we are entering with such hopeful promise was ushered in, it is true, amidst the reverberation of guns on distant fields, but the engagements were comparatively slight and unimportant, and peace seems near at hand.

What is the measure of success in life? We regard that life most successful which has done most under its particular environment for the welfare and happiness of others. The person who is wholly self-centered is neither fit to live nor to die, and dying would, perhaps, better become him. The man who gathers and hoards his money merely that he may feast his covetous eyes upon it is of no earthly use to man or beast. The student who does not yield the rich treasure of his mind for the benefit of others is of little more worth to mankind than gold which lies forever buried in the lowest depths of earth, beyond the reach of man.

We erect monuments to men because they have done something in behalf of other men; because they have rendered service to others. We invoke canvas and marble and granite and bronze to commemorate their unselfish deeds. We pay no tribute to others.

When one approaches the national capitol and observes the white shaft whose summit almost seems to hold communion with the clouds, he knows it was erected to perpetuate some noble character.

That imposing monument at Springfield tells of one of the meekest and greatest of men, who liberated millions, created in the image of their Maker.

And upon the banks of the Hudson stands a mausoleum "fit almost for a dead Diety," erected by his grateful countrymen to one who periled all in the cause of others.

I looked upon the tomb of William of Orange in the venerable city of Delft, the Mecca of the patriot,

and his mighty services in behalf of his countrymen and of the Dutch republic passed before me. He lives in deeds done for others.

The immortals are those who live beyond this brief hour, in things accomplished; accomplished for others, and not alone for self. Neither greed nor vanity has fellowship with immortality.

We should cultivate the quality of mercy which is implanted within us. No nobler attribute has been given us than this. We may recall with profit Crittenden's story of the creation: "When God first conceived the thought of man's creation, He called unto Himself the three angels who constantly wait at the throne, Truth, Justice and Mercy, and thus addressed them. Shall we make man? And Truth answered, O God, make him not for he will pollute Thy sanctuaries. Shall we make man? And Justice answered, O God, make him not for he will trample upon Thy laws. Shall we make man? And Mercy, falling upon her knees and crying through her tears, said, O God, make man, and I will follow him through the dark paths he may have to tread. Then God made man and thus addressed him: Man, thou art the son of Mercy; go thou and deal with thy fellowman."

This university, though young in years, has accomplished much. It has sent forth an alumni that is carrying into their life-work the noble precepts taught them here. They are meeting the demands of life in an intelligent, sturdy and courageous way. They are to be found in the pulpit, lifting their fellowmen to a serener atmosphere.

They are to be found as teachers and professors in schools, colleges and universities, consecrated to as noble and worthy a cause as can summon men. They are shedding honor upon the bar where ability and fidelity are always in request.

They are adding luster to the bench, where men of learning, possessing a keen sense of justice and incorruptible integrity are always demanded.

They are also to be found in the great mercantile and industrial institutions of the country, doing well their part.

They are found upon the farms from which are recruited the best fiber of the republic.

What you have so well learned here is well enough. What you have acquired from the classics, from history, from all the literatures, from the laboratory; in short, all that you have acquired from the class room or from the platform is of little avail in the great work which lies before you if you shall not win and hold the confidence of those with whom you shall fellowship, for in a large sense success in life is built upon confidence. It is the cornerstone of every successful career. Upon it rests the everlasting throne. No stronger, better word was ever born into the human tongue; without it empires fade, republics fall, and the church vanishes as a disordered dream. Confidence, the all-embracing, rich inheritance of a race, the children of men never lisped a grander word; upon its ample base society rests; it is the foundation upon which the temple of justice is erected; destroy it and chaos is come again. Confidence led Grant from Donelson to Appomattox, and Garfield from the towpath to the White House. Confidence is the handmaiden of the arts and the sciences. Confidence in one's self, in one's fellows, confidence in truth and righteousness, conquers the world. Confidence was the torch that led Galileo through the black night into the endless beauty of the garden of the skies. Without confidence it were better the lessons had not been learned; that the lecture room had been closed forever. Confidence of others in you and you in others is the imperative, precedent condition

to all progress, all success. The semblance of confidence, like spurious coin, may pass for a time, but genuine confidence, like pure gold, alone abides forever.

Carry into every act a conscience. Win, if you may, the approval of your fellowmen, but above and beyond all, win the approval of your own conscience. Royalty can confer no decoration which will yield such enduring joy as the approval of one's own conscience. Neither place nor power nor the world's applause can bring the measure of satisfaction, the inexpressible ecstasy, which comes from the approval of that imperious censor, our own conscience. With its approval we can dare all, suffer all, do all.

"Yet still there whispers the small voice within,
Heard through gain's silence, o'er victory's din;
Whatever creed be taught, or land be trod,
Man's conscience is the oracle of God."

I congratulate you that you have come to this historic hour and that you are to receive from your alma mater the high mark of her testimony to your fidelity and your scholarship. Bear her commission without dishonor.

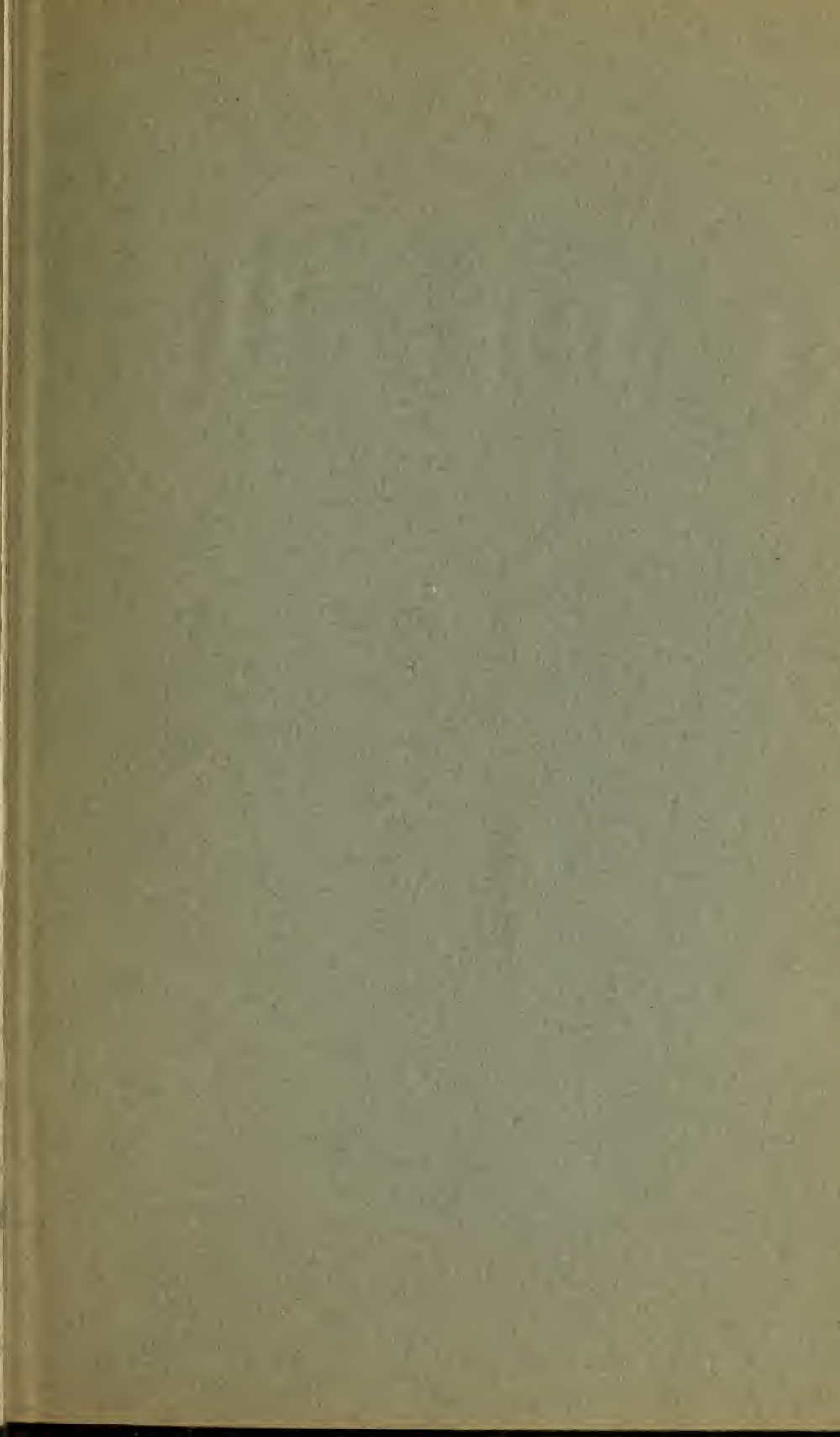
What boundless opportunity invites you. Carry into the work of life a noble purpose. Go forth inspired by an altruistic spirit; go forth with faith in your destiny.

You begin life with a new century which is to be more luminous than the one which has just sunk behind the western hills. Our country is growing better, not worse. We hear much of the evil tendencies of the times, of retrogression. But all countries and all times have had those persons who look only upon the dark and dismal side of things. "Ever since I began to make observations upon the state of my country," said Lord Macaulay, "I have

been seeing nothing but growth and hearing of nothing but decay. The more I contemplate our noble institutions, the more convinced I am that they are sound at heart, that they have nothing of age but its dignity, and that their strength is still the strength of youth."

This utterance is admirably suited to the hour. We are not decadent. We are the inheritors of the wisdom of all the centuries past. We are in the midst of virile youth. No great vice lies at the root of our growth, which promises to lay in ruins the matchless fabric of our institutions.

Those who shall come hither in future years and perform the services which we perform to-day will speak with a profounder wisdom than we possess. They will tell of triumphs in the way of knowledge, of virtue and of patriotism that are beyond the limits of our present vision. Historian, poet and orator will tell not of decay and ruin, but of wholesome growth and expanding power. Let us retire from this hallowed place and from the memorable incidents of this day with a firm resolve to bequeath to those who shall follow us, a land irrevocably dedicated to liberty and law; a land where knowledge is the only master and wisdom the only crown.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 898 176 2